

8. ELEPHANTS LIVING IN HARMONY WITH PEOPLE

It is quite surprising to witness the way in which the Elephants of Anakulam area interact with the local people. This area is a part of the Pooyamkutty reserve forest situated in Devikolam taluk of Idukki district, Kerala, and will be completely denuded if the proposed Pooyamkutty hydro—electric project becomes a reality.

The western border of the Anakulam river bears rich forests that spread northwards, while the eastern border extends up to Mankulam. Herds of elephants regularly visit, drink and revel in the waters of the Anakulam river at one spot, where bubbles are always emerging from the river bed. This part of the river is directly opposite to human habitation, and is easily fordable. But the elephants never cross the river to enter cultivated land.

During daytime the local people bathe and wash their

clothes at the same spot. At the close of the day, when the residents retreat, the same spot is taken over by the behemoths, who in turn return to the dense forest by day-break. The settlers are also very particular not to disturb the elephants during their revelry. They have been witnessing this for the last two to three decades.

One comes across numerous articles about elephants destroying crops and killing people. But in this area such a case is unheard of. During my visit to this area a few months back, from 2100 to 0500 hrs I observed twenty elephants, including young ones, visiting this area. Such harmonious coexistence between man and wild elephants is an unusual phenomenon.

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9. MUSK DEER *MOSCHUS CHRYSOGASTER*: MUSK EXTRACTION FROM LIVE DEER

(With a plate and a text-figure)

INTRODUCTION

The Himalayan Musk Deer *Moschus chrysogaster*, a primitive ruminant, is commonly found in the Himalayan region between 2400-4300 m in Nepal. The main threat to Musk Deer survival is habitat destruction and poaching to procure musk pod from the males. But these use of traps and snares also kills females and young indiscriminately (Blower 1974).

The musk sac is located between the reproductive organs and the umbilicus. It opens to the exterior through an orifice which lies anterior to that of the urethra. Traditionally, the musk pod is incised out after killing the deer. The musk can also be extracted by a simple operation, but this method is time consuming and causes much stress in the deer (Shrestha 1983).

METHODS

An 18-month old male was physically restrained and secured by three persons and placed on its side to expose the umbilical region. A silver scoop with one large and one small groove at each end was sterilised and lubricated with antibiotic cream. Holding the musk sac with left hand, the scoop was inserted gently with a rotating movement. The edge of the scoop is smooth and rounded to facilitate easy insertion and to prevent injury to the musk gland. T

musk was collected by rotating the scoop and was scooped out. Antibiotic cream was applied in the gland to prevent possible infection. The whole operation was completed within 15 minutes. Because this technique was found most suitable, scooping was repeated 6 times on the same animal.

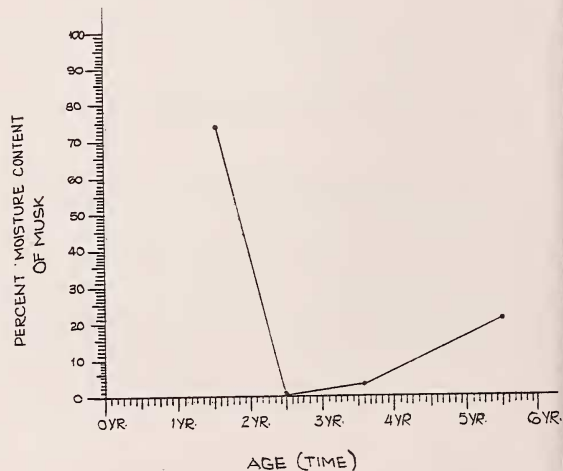
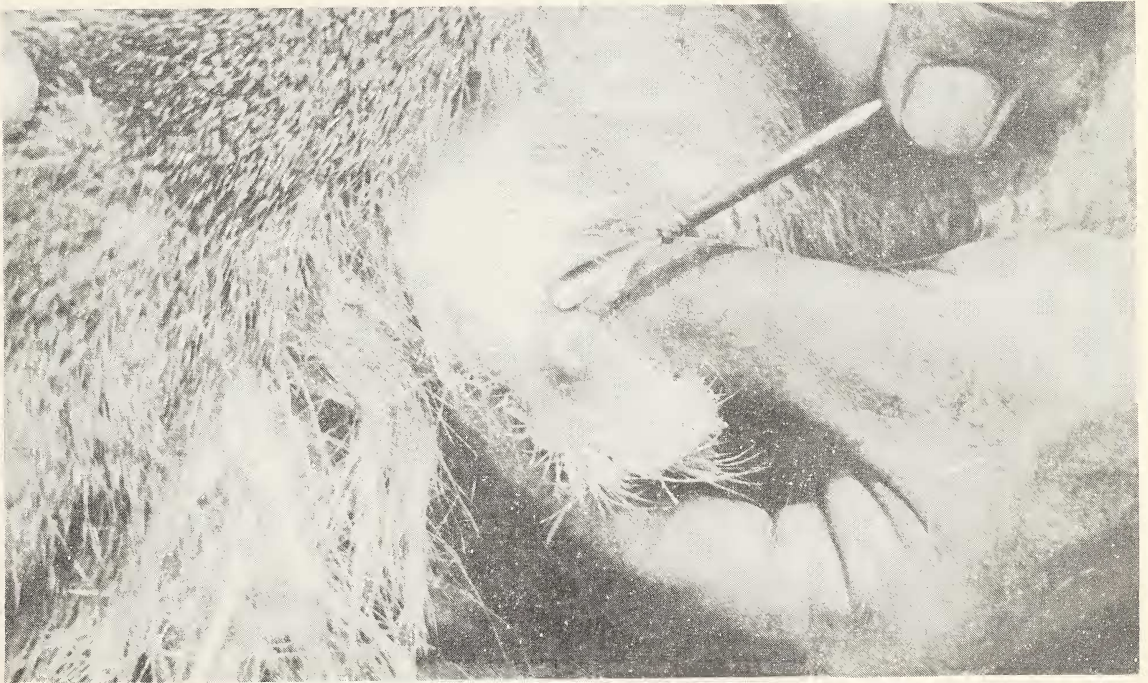


Fig. 1. % moisture content of musk yield at different ages.

Shresha: Musk Deer



Above: Musk Deer

Below: Extraction from musk gland, using a scoop.

